



Classical Bulletin

Special Issue 3, 2018

doi: 10.33909/cb/94.2018.03.87/2_

A private library of Zaragoza from the early fifteenth century: the books of Miguel Rubio, canon of Pilar

Helena Carvajal González

Washington Univ, St Louis, MO 63130 USA.

Abstract

"I started English classes at the age of 9. The teacher was not particularly fun. The April 9 arrest and extradition request of former senior Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) commander and peace negotiator Jesús Santrich highlights the complex challenges Colombia faces in the implementation of the historic November 2016 peace agreement with the FARC. Over a year and a half since the signing of the agreement, Colombia finds itself in one of the most critical moments in its efforts to definitively put to rest over five decades of armed conflict that has left more than 8.5 million victims in its wake. Frustrations surrounding the mixed results in the implementation of the peace agreement are exacerbated by the natural uncertainty over the upcoming May 27 presidential elections and its policy impact.

Keywords: Zaragoza, Miguel Rubio, Canon of Pilar

Introduction

Legislative Election Sets the Stage for Presidential Vote

Though sporadic incidents of aggression and hostility marred recent legislative campaigns, the March 11 legislative election was Colombia's most peaceful in more than 50 years. The impact of the disarmament of over 90 percent of the

FARC's more than 10,000 combatants and militia members was clear. In contrast to the high levels of violence that have plagued past elections, only two minor incidents were reported this year. Moreover, the National Liberation Army (ELN), the country's second-largest rebel group, upheld a temporary unilateral ceasefire bolstering flailing popular support for its own peace talks with the current government.

The congressional results were favorable for the right-wing Democratic Center Party, led by former President Alvaro Uribe who spearheaded the winning campaign against the FARC accord in October 2016 when it was put to a public referendum. The traditional Conservative and Liberal parties, as well as current President Juan Manuel Santos' own party, lost seats while the political left and centrist candidates out-performed expectations. Plagued by limited access to banks and hostile protesters at many of its campaign events, the FARC's candidates expectedly received few votes. However, as a part of the peace accord, the former rebels are guaranteed 10 congressional seats for two terms.

With the composition of the next Congress set, jockeying and coalition-building among the main presidential candidates has been in full swing. Recent polling indicates that Uribe's protégé Ivan Duque and the leftist former mayor of Bogotá, Gustavo Petro, are the most likely candidates to reach a second round. Attempts to build a centrist coalition to overcome the country's polarization have yet to come to fruition.

Most presidential candidates are divided on their support for continuing talks with the ELN in Quito, where delegations are racing against the clock before the next president is sworn in to design a new indefinite bilateral ceasefire and cement the parameters for public participation. However, with exception of Duque, nearly all candidates agree to continue efforts to implement the increasingly vulnerable FARC peace accord in one form or another.

A Lack of Progress Leads to Mounting Distrust

Over a year and a half since its signing and nearly a year since the FARC's disarmament was completed, general mistrust in the capacity and will of the state to fulfill its commitments is mounting among ex-combatants and civil society organizations. The patterns of clientelism that traditionally plague government institutions are coupled with a skeptical and reticent segment of politicians and the population, which has been emboldened to resist the accord's implementation by the failure of the October 2016 referendum.

While the rebels handed in more weapons per combatant than any insurgent group in modern history, in addition to extensive properties and stashes of gold, the former combatants are deeply frustrated with the significant delays in the implementation of the structural reforms outlined in the agreement and the practical support promised for their socio-economic transition to civilian occupations.

Thousands have deserted government and United Nations-monitored cantonment sites because of limited services and infrastructure. And despite all the expectations that the collective cooperative-style agricultural projects—in

line with the insurgency's leftist ideologies—would receive funding, no land has been set aside for such ventures and only one such project covering roughly 60 ex-combatants has been approved to date. Meanwhile, 625 FARC members remain in prison due to bureaucratic delays in the implementation of the amnesty law and many former rebels have still not yet been fully accredited to receive their promised monthly stipends, even though that assistance is slated to expire in less than two months.

Despite the mechanisms to fast track peace accord-related bills through Congress last year, no legislation was passed regarding the core political and agrarian reforms painstakingly negotiated during the first few years of the peace process. A proposed law to establish the 16 special peace electoral districts, agreed to in order to enhance the representation of victims' groups, was voted down.

The rural development programs that have been launched have been plagued by poor planning and important structural governance challenges engendering weak coordination and limited effectiveness. Not only has this resulted in public resources assigned for the implementation process expiring and going unused in certain cases, but in the past weeks the attorney general has opened investigations into allegations of corruption in management of the hundreds of millions of dollars donated to the Colombian Peace Fund. For his part, the general secretary of the Special Peace Jurisdiction resigned after being asked to account for international donor funds.

Violence and Drugs Remain a Reality

Significant progress has been made in setting up the special transitional justice courts and an accompanying truth commission, reducing police and military casualties, expanding the demining program, and the number of internally displaced persons has dramatically fallen from annual averages. Nonetheless, while homicide rates have remained on a steady decline for the past 10 years, there was a dramatic increase in violence in post-FARC territories over the first months of 2018 in comparison to the same period over 2017. Though the FARC rebels withdrew from their historical rural strongholds in October 2016, it was not until early 2018 that the government launched a new security plan to deploy 63,000 new soldiers and police to 67 prioritized post-FARC municipalities.

With new structures of rural local power emerging in the absence of the FARC's dominant parallel administration, competing organized crime groups and the ELN have been largely responsible for the alarming surge in targeted threats and assassination against "uncooperative" community and social leaders, which increased by 45 percent between 2016 and 2017. FARC leaders decry the fact that 51 of their members have also been killed since the signing of the agreement.

Although not entirely due to the peace process, coca production has increased over threefold from 118,000 acres in 2012 to 360,000 acres in 2016. One of the agreement's core elements focuses on support to rural coca farmers to transition to alternative sources of income. As a result, about 54,000 out

of 180,000 families have joined the crop substitution process with about half of them receiving roughly \$400 per month from the government. However, there has been little progress in strengthening local markets for alternative products, providing technical assistance to farmers, constructing rural roads, expanding access to health care and education, and poor coordination between the crop substitution program and the police's forced eradication efforts, further undermining trust between the government and rural communities.

Santrich's Arrest Heightens Suspicions on All Sides

The arrest and extradition request of Santrich sent further shockwaves through proponents of the tenuous implementation process. Slated to take up a guaranteed seat in the next Congress, Santrich is alleged to have conspired with Mexico's Sinaloa cartel after the signing of the peace agreement to traffic 10 tons of cocaine to the United States in exchange for a payment of three million dollars.

Although the arrest demonstrates that Colombian institutions have not been handed over to the FARC as former President Uribe has alleged, it has only bolstered suspicions that the former rebels are not fully committed to their disarmament and transition to legal civilian lives. Despite overwhelming evidence against Santrich, many former FARC rebels view his arrest as further undermining their legal security and thus trust in the peace agreement.

Ivan Duque has stated that upon taking office he would restructure the peace agreement including changing the amnesty provisions for drug trafficking carried out by FARC leaders prior to the signing of the peace accord. Such a measure would put hundreds of former FARC commanders in legal peril and likely lead to flooding the ranks of dissident factions, which already number over one thousand, thus sadly drowning even further any momentum in the peace agreement's implementation.

Ahead of May's presidential election, the stakes are higher than ever for peace in Colombia.

Scholars' reactions to the announcement of a day of Holocaust remembrance varied. David Cesarani, who later became a founding trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, emphasized the inherent value in having a day in the national calendar that could act as "contested terrain for interpretations of the Holocaust and genocide."¹⁶ Others, most notably Donald Bloxham, Dan Stone and Tony Kushner, were far more wary about the lack of confrontation with some of the more difficult questions associated with the day, including amongst others the failure to address the issue of Britain's own colonial past.¹⁷

Tensions and conflicts surrounding the day were also to enter the public and political spheres before the inaugural ceremony in what Yair Auron describes as "a particularly stormy controversy" over the exclusion of victims of the Armenian genocide from the commemorative program.¹⁸ The omission of any reference to Armenia in the conceptualization of the day was quickly noted by journalist Robert Fisk who referred to the exclusion as an act of "sheer political cowardice" on the part of the British government.¹⁹ Initial efforts by the Anglo-

Armenian community to be represented during the first Holocaust Memorial Day came to no avail but interest in, and growing criticism of, the absence of Armenia gained momentum in the national press. Reflecting growing public interest in this decision, representatives from the Home Office were asked during a House of Commons debate in November 2000 whether the Government would include any reference to the massacre of Armenians during the commemoration of the Holocaust Memorial Day. The Minister of State for Immigration, Mike O'Brien reiterated the government's line that:

Holocaust Memorial Day is focused on learning the lessons of the Holocaust and other more recent atrocities that raise similar issues. We took a conscious decision to focus on events around the Holocaust and thereafter, although we did examine requests to consider the atrocities and other events that preceded the Holocaust... It is always difficult to draw a line and wherever it is drawn it runs the risk of being misinterpreted.²⁰

Nonetheless, for many the marginalisation of the genocide undermined the entire ethos of a day commemorating the Holocaust. Mark Levene attributed this lack of inclusion and the British government's persistent failure to recognise the Armenian genocide to "the government's current political sensitivities, not only with regard to any direct relationship with Turkey but, much more profoundly, as a result of the complex set of interconnections enmeshing Britain within the Atlantic alliance."²¹ Levene's interpretation that present-day political concerns took precedence over the legitimate acknowledgement and commemoration of the Armenian genocide was shown to be justified after the release of a Foreign Office memorandum stating that whilst the British government would be "open to criticism in terms of the ethical dimension [,] recognising the genocide would provide no practical benefit to the UK" particularly in light of the importance of the British relationship with Turkey.²²

In an attempt to deflect growing anger from interested parties, a small number of representatives from the Armenian community were invited to attend the inaugural ceremony "after the event was seen to be in danger of descending into an unseemly row over recognition between different groups."²³ It was also agreed that the "massacre of Armenians" could be referred to by the BBC and within the ceremony itself.²⁴ Armenia, however, has remained a topic of debate over the years, particularly in 2015 with the centenary of the event. In response to the heightened arguments surrounding Britain's lack of recognition of this genocide, rather euphemistically dubbed as the Armenian "tragedy," the British Government shifted its position preferring to account for this lack of engagement by suggesting that:

"...the British Government recognise as genocide only those events found to be so by international courts – for example the Holocaust and the massacres in Srebrenica and Rwanda. We do not exercise a political judgement in ascribing the term "genocide" to a set of events, whether in Armenia, the Holodomor in Ukraine or the massacres of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein in 1998."²⁵

The decision by the British government to frame their interpretation of genocide as those decreed by international courts, as opposed to genocide as it is defined by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide reflects the tension between

officially remembering the Holocaust and remembering other genocides in contemporary society. The response to criticism of the omission provided by Neil Frater, a representative from the Home Office's Race Equality Unit responsible for overseeing the consultation process for Holocaust Memorial Day, provided a fascinating insight into the confusion endemic to the conceptualisation of the day itself. Although referring to the atrocities in Armenia as "an appalling tragedy" and offering the British government's "sympathies" to the descendants of those who had perished, after consulting with the Holocaust Memorial Day Steering Group the decision was taken not to include Armenia in the day "to avoid the risk of the message becoming too diluted if we try to include too much history."²⁶ This fear that the message of the day might become too 'diluted' raises significant questions about the way in which the Holocaust intersects with other genocides in British consciousness and, in turn, what exactly the 'message' of the day is intended to be.

Although the Holocaust was the principal hub around which this day had been created, incorporating other genocides also appeared to be one of the main objectives of the day. In the program created to accompany the 2001 inaugural memorial service at Westminster Abbey, Home Secretary Jack Straw noted that "Holocaust Memorial Day is about learning the lessons of the Holocaust and other more recent atrocities that raise similar issues."²⁷

The supposed emphasis on 'more recent' genocides not only ensured that Armenia did not, and does not, feature prominently within the remembrance day but also led to the somewhat uneven treatment of past genocides in British commemoration. Other genocides that have occurred since the Holocaust, in particular those committed in Bosnia and Rwanda, have to varying degrees come to be absorbed into the day of remembrance. Yet the position of the Holocaust as the central genocide of the day, and the subsequent hierarchy of suffering this implies, has been evident since the opening ceremony. The official program for Holocaust Memorial Day 2001 asserted that "over 169,000,000 people died during the 20th century as a result of state sponsored mass murder" before going on to clarify the government's position that "among them all, the Holocaust stands out as an example at the extreme."²⁸ Sentiments such as these articulated the extent to which the Holocaust was designed to be the main focus of the day. The strapline "Remembering Genocides: Lessons for the Future" was, Cesarani noted, only included due to criticism of the apparent focus on the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.²⁹

What then of the 'message' that the Government was trying to convey? The message that, they feared, would be so easily diluted by "too much history"? When announcing the establishment of the day, Tony Blair articulated his hope that, "Holocaust Memorial Day will be a day when we reflect and remember and give our commitment and pledge that the terrible and evil deeds done in our world should never be repeated."³⁰ The way in which both this and later memorial days were framed reveals the start of an institutional trend with regards to how the Holocaust was thought about in the opening years of the 21st century. This distinctive trend encouraged the abstraction and decontextualisation of the Holocaust within British consciousness in which its

'lessons' center on tolerance and anti-racism. This abstraction can ultimately be seen in the "unmooring of the Holocaust from its historical specificity and its circulation instead as an abstract code for Evil and thus as the model for a potential antiracist and human rights politics."³¹

In its formative years, responsibility for the day lay under the auspices of the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills. In 2005, however, the independent charitable organization the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) was established to promote, support and deliver Holocaust Memorial Day to the country on behalf of the British government. Although the HMD is now run independently from the government, it continues to be centrally funded and is therefore still reflective of official policy. Despite this continuity, the creation of the HMDT had considerable implications for the way in which the Memorial Day was framed over the following years.

Every year the Memorial Day is based on a specific theme, thereby providing "a focus for events and education in local and national commemorations."³² The inaugural ceremony "Remembering Genocides: Lessons for the Future" was followed by "Britain and the Holocaust" (2002) and "Children and the Holocaust" (2003). Although these themes aroused controversy, they also contained the potential for historical rootedness and even critical self-reflection, as in the case of the 2002 theme "Britain and the Holocaust." On that occasion, the theme paper referred to the fact that the "ambiguity of Britain's response to Nazi tyranny and racism is lodged in our heritage," and that such ambiguity acted as "an inspiration, a warning and a guide."³³

After the establishment of HMDT, however, there was a shift towards more abstract themes promoting civil morality and democratic values. The emphasis on the "lessons" that contemporary society could draw from the event became increasingly more central to the day than engagement with the historical event itself. This emphasis on moral instruction as opposed to encouraging critical reflection has been termed by Donald Bloxham as being the "pathos approach" to Holocaust commemoration and education, favoring moral judgment and ceremonial processes of remembrance at the expense of tackling more complex historical questions regarding how people came to commit such crimes and why they were able to do so.³⁴ The 2006 theme "One Person Can Make a Difference" is a case in point; people were encouraged to learn "to use one's voice to enhance positive human values."³⁵ By the same token the 2008 theme "Imagine... Remember, Reflect, React" "challenges us all to imagine the unimaginable" and stands as a "call to action to remember the past, reflect on the present and react to create a better future."³⁶ The importance of remembrance was also raised by the 2015 "Keep the Memory Alive," which in its theme paper reiterated the imperative of remembrance to ensure that "we pay respect to [the victims'] unimaginable suffering while retaining the lessons of the past for future generations."³⁷

As the years went by the themes became ever more focused about the way in which learning from the Holocaust could generate positive active participation in contemporary society. The vision paper for the "Legacy of Hope" event in 2010 explicitly asked those participating in the day to "to look within and with-

out, to be sure of our moral compass, to be certain of our choices and to use our voice, whenever we can, to speak out.”³⁸ Such an inducement to speak out was later encouraged by the theme vision of 2012, which specifically demanded that people “Speak up [and] Speak out” against discrimination and exclusion in their communities. Community was also at the heart of the day the following year, “Communities Together: Build a Bridge” and the traditional ceremony was accompanied by a special public event held on the Millennium Bridge in which “members of the public signed personal statements, pledging to build a bridge in their communities for HMD.” Such shifts away from contextualised historical engagement and towards abstract identification in the service of moral civic instruction makes the government’s concern with having ‘too much history,’ especially uncomfortable history, somewhat less pressing.

Not everyone fully agreed with this approach. In discussing the reasons behind his scepticism towards Holocaust Memorial Day, the son of one survivor observed: “I suspect that it is because remembering the Holocaust has become an official ritual that allows every sanctimonious politician and public figure to put their superior moral virtues on public display.”³⁹ Increasingly, therefore, the Holocaust is not only used to advance messages of tolerance but also as an opportunity for politicians to be seen to demonstrate their own moral standing through promoting their own role in the commemorations themselves. Every year politicians are invited by the Holocaust Educational Trust to sign a Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Commitment designed to illustrate their commitment to the day of remembrance and their pledge to remember those who died. MPs ‘speak out’ against prejudice and intolerance by signing the books of remembrance.

The lucid and carefully sculpted entries of the Prime Minister of the time usually contain messages for contemporary society through platitudes such as “humanity survived our descent into evil and if we recommit today to remembrance and to resistance to evil, then that is the legacy of hope.”⁴⁰ At the same time, backbench MPs who sign the memorial books often express sentiments that never explain why “we must always remember what happened” or define exactly why “each new generation needs to know what happened.”⁴¹ The photographs taken of those members of Parliament signing the book, in turn, are then placed on individual MPs constituency website as proof of their actions and of their dedication to remembering what happened.⁴² Regardless of sincere individual commitment the cumulative effect is often that “Holocaust Memorial Day is becoming a Victorian religious rally to which the audience is urged to subscribe and those who don’t are cast as uncivilized.”⁴³

Such abstraction from critical historical understanding alongside the continual reference to Britain’s role in the Second World War ultimately reinforces understandings of a national identity built on supposed, and inherent, British values, thus validating the concern expressed as early as 2000 by Cesarani that the event might “serve to celebrate Britain’s role in defeating Nazism and its supposedly humane immigration record in the 1930s and since.”⁴⁴ Such decontextualization and abstraction is also discernible in the educational initiatives promoted by organizations committed to ensuring the Holocaust contin-

ues to have a significant presence in British culture, as will be considered in greater depth in the following section.

Education and Holocaust Memorialization

The question as to whether pedagogy has a “special and unique task in the education of man in the world after Auschwitz” has been posed repeatedly.⁴⁵ The establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day saw the firm institutionalization of the Holocaust within British society as an educational event.⁴⁶ Education certainly emerged as a significant mediator of Holocaust consciousness in the final decade of the twentieth century having become a mandatory part of the first National Curriculum for all secondary school students in England and Wales in 1991. The development of Holocaust education since this time has frequently been cited as a key turning point in terms of Britain's engagement with the Nazi genocide, signalling a shift from the institutional silences or distortions that had characterized previous decades.⁴⁷

Following the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day, pedagogy played an even greater role in the transmission of the Holocaust in British society. As Cesarani suggested, the commemorative day “will be reinforced by an educational program informed by government departments but devolved on to educational authorities and schools around Britain.”⁴⁸ Education was thus envisaged as being the means by which critical engagement with the day, and the Holocaust, could occur. Reflecting this educational commitment, the HMDT oversaw the publication and distribution of education packs tailored around the specific theme of the year and the creation of individual resources with accompanying guidance notes for educators. Although the HMDT holds overall responsibility for the day, other educational organizations who are active throughout the year have come to assume a role in encouraging participation in HMD and in promoting Holocaust teaching and remembrance outside of this framework.

Governmental guidance for teachers on how to tackle this complex and emotive subject had been fragmentary at best during the formative years of Holocaust teaching. This perhaps accounts for the influence which non-governmental institutions like the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Imperial War Museum and Holocaust Centre have had on the shape of Holocaust education. These organizations were to play an even more significant role in promoting education and remembrance after the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day for education, much like the community-based aspects of the day was always “intended to be driven by grassroots activists.”⁴⁹ The most significant of these is the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET), a lobby turned charitable organization formed in 1988 in the wake of the establishment of the All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group as a means of “promoting research, supporting Holocaust education, producing resources and advancing the teaching of the Nazi genocide in educational institutions.”⁵⁰ In the years since its creation the Trust has grown to be one of the most prominent educational charities in the country.

The material being promoted by the HET was specifically designed to inspire integration, citizenship and community engagement. This mode of Holocaust education, which developed in earnest after the establishment of HMD, prioritizes the transmission and mediation of such contemporary 'lessons' applicable for all, reinforces a more malleable narrative of the Holocaust with recognizable pertinence for contemporary British society. As a result of this emphasis, it is possible to see a gradual shift promoted by HMDT and organizations such as the HET and Anne Frank Trust away from the historical context of the Holocaust in favor of imparting contemporary 'lessons' more effectively.

The question as to whether there is a possibility of 'lessons' for contemporary society being derived from the Holocaust has prompted fierce and prolonged debate between educationists and historians alike.⁵¹ These debates cannot be reproduced here but what is apparent is that the concept of 'lessons' has emerged as a dominant aspect of the way in which the Holocaust is both taught and conceptualized. Whilst this approach is reflected in other countries too, within Britain the approach to Holocaust teaching transmitted through 'lessons' for the future has achieved a particular pertinence and provides the moral justification for the continued inclusion of the Holocaust on the National Curriculum. As Andrew Burns observed, it is hoped that the "lessons from that disastrous period of history guide us in the future."⁵² Such sentiments are continually evoked in both the classroom and in wider culture and used to reflect the righteousness of Britain's moral commitment to multiculturalism or as a means of emphasizing the benefits of living in a tolerant democracy.

This move towards the Holocaust as holding 'lessons' for contemporary society can even be discerned in the shifting emphasis of the aims of the Holocaust Educational Trust. The founding aim of the Trust was originally to "show our citizens and especially our youngsters what happened when racism replaced diversity and when mass murder took over a nation."⁵³ Such an aim reflected the relative dearth of easily accessible information for students and teachers at the time and the seeming ambivalence of the wider British population towards engaging with the Holocaust. In this vein, the organization's primary purpose was to inform the British people about the subject itself. In contrast, the aim of the Trust at the present time is to "educate young people from every background about the Holocaust and the important lessons to be learned for today."⁵⁴ Other educational organizations have also adopted this conviction about moral 'lessons' being transmitted to students in a transformative manner. The Holocaust Centre in Nottingham suggests that Holocaust education can help to foster "good citizenship"⁵⁵ values whilst the London Jewish Cultural Centre claims that through learning about the Holocaust we are able to "fight prejudice and bigotry."⁵⁶ Such is the prominence of the notion of the Holocaust holding contemporary meaning applicable to daily life that the idea that the Holocaust contains 'lessons' for contemporary society is accepted almost without question in the public sphere.

Reflecting, and shaping, the significance attributed to the existence of such contemporary 'lessons' and the shift towards a more contemporary oriented Holocaust education is the Lessons from Auschwitz (LFA) project run by the Holocaust Educational Trust. Established in 1999, the LFA project is a four-

part program for sixth-form students aged between 16 and 18 and teachers; it includes a one-day visit to the sites of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II. Originally created by Rabbi Barry Marcus of the Central Synagogue in London as a way to inform the Jewish community in Britain about the Holocaust, since the adoption of the project by the Trust, the visits have now escalated to such an extent that they are a high profile vehicle through which the Holocaust is mediated to British students.⁵⁷ The British government has funded the project since 2005 when the Treasury pledged an annual sum of £1.5million to facilitate and expand the project.

Since the adoption of the initiative by the Holocaust Educational Trust, the project has been re-oriented towards a more multicultural audience through the projection of a universalized British narrative espousing lessons for contemporary society. Following the visit to Auschwitz, as part of the Follow Up session, educators provide students with a selection of 'historical conclusions and contemporary lessons' that the Trust feels that students should learn as a result of being taught about the Holocaust.⁵⁸ These contemporary 'lessons' which students are provided with range from the fact that "Societies are made up of individuals. If we want to make the world a more humane place, we must start with our own everyday actions," to "The UK government plays a key role in global events and we, as citizens, can influence governmental policy" to "We must promote tolerance of others by recognizing the role played by all regardless of gender, race or creed."⁵⁹ Students then chose which of these contemporary concerns resonates most with them and that is then defined as being a 'lesson' of the Holocaust.

After participation in the project students become Ambassadors for the Trust. In this role, the Trust asserts, these young people become part of the "driving force behind our efforts to ensure that people across Britain understand the importance of remembering the Holocaust."⁶⁰ This is often achieved by students presenting their trip to their school, writing material for the local newspaper, discussing their visit with local community groups or planting a memorial tree and inviting those in the community to witness the dedication. As Chief Executive of the Trust Karen Pollock observed, "The inspiring work students go on to do in their local areas demonstrates the importance of the visit."⁶¹

Martin Davies has asserted that "education is a simulacrum of the society it serves." ⁶² This is in part true, but it is clear that by intersecting with commemoration, education does not simply represent the society it serves but also concurs in shaping society's self-perception. Much like Holocaust Memorial Day the question with education is what exactly it hopes to achieve. Are Holocaust educators seeking to teach the history of the event or are they intending to use the Holocaust to provide moral instruction aimed at forging feelings of citizenship and a sense of identity based on democratic values? Perhaps more significantly, perhaps, what is the intention of the British Government in funding these initiatives? The message that the Government wants to mediate through education appears to be subscribing to the same "pathos" approach to the subject observed in Holocaust Memorial Day. Certainly the de-contextualization of the Holocaust, discernable in the National Curriculum in

which it is compulsory to teach about the Holocaust but not mandatory to teach about the Second World War seems to point in that direction.

The use of the Holocaust to encourage civic sentiments and democratic values is certainly not unique and is situated alongside a shift in British policy towards education in response to international, and perceived domestic, threats. The introduction of the Preventing Violent Extremism (more commonly referred to as the 'Prevent') Programme in the wake of the terror attacks of 2001 and the London bombings of 2005 to promote "mainstream British values: democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind"⁶³ is just one example of how the field of education has been recruited into helping to sculpt a sense of British identity. This was taken even further in the summer of 2015 when the Government made adherence to the program a statutory duty to respond to the "ideological threat of terrorism" and to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism."⁶⁴ Situated alongside such discourse, and alongside institutionalized attempts to both sculpt identity and counter extremism in the age of terror, the moves in Holocaust education towards promoting citizenship and democracy reflect a more significant shift in British educational policy over the last 15 years.

An Absence of Intersections? Britishness and the Kindertransport

If education is being overtly harnessed to project supposedly 'British' values to counter subversive elements in society in the so called 'pre-criminal space' then the use of the Holocaust as a way of asserting British identity is rather more subtly employed.⁶⁵ This is often achieved by drawing on powerful and emotive 'symbols' such as Holocaust survivors, who have become integral to education in Britain, to the point that they are referred to as being the "Heart of Holocaust Education."⁶⁶ As the Holocaust Educational Trust tells students: "survivor testimonies are powerful because they challenge the process of dehumanization... we cannot imagine the numbers of people that suffered during the Holocaust....However, we can gain some understanding by focusing on the individual stories and testimonies of those who suffered and died."⁶⁷ By using survivor testimonies to encourage a focus on the individual experience, educators are trying to ensure that the victims of the Holocaust are not simply reduced to abstract figures. It is believed that, if students are able to engage with individual testimony, their understanding of human experience within an incomprehensible event can be enhanced.⁶⁸

The form of education promoted by these organizations within their Outreach programs has also helped to propel the survivor witness into the public eye, thereby ensuring that they are increasingly accessible to the public in commemorative events. The way survivors are encountered within British commemorative culture helps to perpetuate narratives of supposedly 'British' liberal democratic values. The visible position of naturalized British survivors during memorial days provides indisputable proof of the value of past British actions on the international stage whilst at the same time championing deeply

ingrained self-perceptions of Britain that might end up hindering open discussion about less uplifting past and present aspects of British life.

The role of survivors in British Holocaust talk is particularly discernible in the way the theme of rescue epitomized by the Kindertransport features heavily in both education and memorialization. Referred to by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust as a “unique humanitarian programme” the Kindertransport was overlooked in British collective consciousness until the 50th anniversary of the transports.⁶⁹ Since that time, the Kindertransports have evolved so as to become “a source of great national pride within the British historical imagination.”⁷⁰ The British scheme to allow approximately 10,000 children into Britain following Kristallnacht on 9 November 1938 has been seen as Britain “securing the future” of those Jewish children who came to Britain.⁷¹

That the Kindertransport has become enshrined within British cultural imagination as an example of the British people rescuing thousands of innocents in a time of adversity is unsurprising. The murder of 1.5 million children, understandably, carries significant emotive power. Just as the murder of children has assumed a prominent position within Holocaust consciousness so too the rescue of children has become an equally dominant theme in British historical understanding. This was enhanced by the decision to make the “Children of the Holocaust” the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2003, thus highlighting the contrast between the position of Jewish children in Nazi occupied territories and the relative safety of those who had been permitted entry into Britain. This has been further reinforced by the creation of an interactive exhibition referred to as “The Journey” at The National Holocaust Centre & Museum in Nottingham. The exhibition, built primarily for the mediation of the Holocaust to primary-aged children, follows the story of 10 year old Leo Stein, a German Jewish boy who came to England as part of the Kindertransport. Given that the Holocaust, with the oft-forgotten exception of the deportation of Jews from the Channel Islands, did not take place on British soil it is perhaps not surprising that one of the most significant roles of survivors in maintaining and reinforcing a notable British connection to the Holocaust is through those who came to Britain. Popular British understanding of the Kindertransport, mediated by politicians, the media and organizations such as the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Imperial War Museum is, to varying degrees, one of prevailing pride in the British rescue of thousands of Jewish children from the clutches of Nazi aggression.⁷²

One widely publicized commemorative event reinforcing this memory of Britain as a place of refuge, and in which survivors appeared to play an integral part, was the 70th anniversary re-enactment of the journey carried out by hundreds of children from Czechoslovakia to Britain in what has become known as the Winton Train, or the Czech Kindertransport. Independent of the Kindertransport operation, but often considered in conjunction with it, the rescue of 669 children by Nicholas Winton has become a significant part of British historical consciousness of the Holocaust. On 1 September 2009, in order to commemorate this act, a train carrying 170 people, including 22 of the child evacuees who were originally involved in this transport and their descendants, left Prague and followed the route taken by the original Winton Trains. They

were met in London on 4 September by Nicholas Winton himself with the words, widely reported at the time, "It's wonderful to see you all after 70 years. Don't leave it quite so long until we meet here again."⁷³

How can we interpret survivors' roles in the remembrance of this event? On the one hand their presence was vital. Without the survivors the journey could not have been relived and the memory would undoubtedly have resonated less widely with the public. Yet, conversely, whilst the survivors were necessary, their experiences were somewhat supplementary to the commemoration, which overwhelmingly centered on Winton himself. The same is also true within popular consciousness of the Kindertransport and, indeed, within wider commemoration of the Holocaust. For whilst the prominence of survivors indicates an increased engagement with them, it can also be seen to promote narratives of British heroism and righteousness.

The press contributed considerably to the perpetuation of the narrative emphasizing the salvation provided to the children admitted into Britain, many of whom are still living in this country. The BBC discussed the enactment under the heading "Czech evacuees thank their saviour."⁷⁴ In fact so dominant is the memory that the man who organized the transports from Czechoslovakia is often referred to in the British media as the "British Schindler."⁷⁵ These traditional interpretations of rescue are reinforced by the expressions of gratitude articulated by survivors themselves. One survivor, Bronia Snow, is reported as stating that in Britain she quickly became 'an Anglophile... I became appreciative of this wonderful country, its toleration, and its good manners.'⁷⁶ Sentiments such as this expressing appreciation towards Britain are frequent and extremely important when considering the role of survivors in British understanding of the Holocaust and of Britain's role within it. Survivors' political value does not only lie in the messages of humanity politicians want to promote but also in the relationship they appear to have with the country in which they found refuge.⁷⁷

Due to the emotiveness of the subject, the expressions of gratitude expressed by survivors and the political pride articulated during commemorative activities, the Kindertransport and the Winton Train have been absorbed within British historical consciousness as acts of rescue representative of tolerance and liberalism at a time when other nations were embracing Fascism. Through replicating the journey of the Winton Train the notion of British rescue, an already powerful story, became firmly entrenched in Britain's Holocaust consciousness. It was not so much the Jewish children but the British man who rescued them who took center stage during the commemorative events. As a result, the survivors are necessary to the story not because of what their experiences reveal about the Holocaust but because of what their presence in Britain reinforces about British identity and past benevolence. This of course should not suggest a belittling of Winton's achievements, nor the achievement of the Kindertransports, but rather that to consider them critically would create a more grounded historical consciousness and place British attitudes both in the past and in the present within a more contextualized and historically nuanced understanding. Instead, the way in which the Kindertransport and British attitudes towards immigration are remembered circumvent difficult ques-

tions and risk turning a complex and multifaceted event into a simple redemptive narrative. As Louise London suggests, “a gulf exists” between the memory and history of British engagement with its past when considering this period and, in particular, the notion of providing a safe haven for all those who required it.⁷⁸

Despite the presence of survivors, the historical consciousness promoted is not one primarily about their experiences but, increasingly, about British pride. This positive narrative does not account for the fact that, as Mark Mazower has noted, despite Britain ‘priding itself on its tolerance and liberalism, it has in fact only accepted Jews on certain conditions and requires their conformism and assimilation.’⁷⁹ Thus, the position of the survivor in contemporary Holocaust discourse allows for the continuation of a somewhat mythical remembrance both of the Holocaust and of British treatment of the “Other.” This constellation is at the core of statements such as, for example, that of Ian Austin MP:

“It is true that our country did not do enough, of course, and that it could have done more, and sooner, but no one can deny that when other countries were rounding up their Jews Britain provided a safe haven. It was British troops, as we have heard, who liberated the concentration camps, rescuing tens of thousands of inmates from almost certain death and enabling many of those to go on and prosper under the democratic values of the UK.”⁸⁰

The domestication of Holocaust survivors and their experiences in education, together with the relative de-contextualization of the Holocaust in the commemorative sphere, combine to reinforce a narrative that, whilst emphasizing the centrality of the Holocaust, also runs the risk distancing Britain from Europe in British imagination.

European Holocaust Consciousness or Domesticated Holocaust Identity?

The way in which the Holocaust has come to be absorbed into British consciousness since 2001 reflects the inherent tensions between the decontextualized narrative that has evolved in British Holocaust education and commemoration, and the subsequent impact this narrative has had on contemporary conceptualization of British national identity. These conceptualizations based on representations of the Holocaust also intersect with dominant narratives of the Second World War and influence understandings of Britain’s place in Europe. British narratives of the war and the Holocaust present distinctive features. As Mark Donnelly noted, despite being “a global conflict which killed some 60 million and which left the legacy of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and countless acts of barbarism [the war] has evoked nostalgia, pride and even sentimentality in Britain.”⁸¹

It is certainly difficult to separate the memory of the Holocaust from the memory of the British defeat of Nazism and the prevailing of democratic ideals. As a member of the House of Lords declared during a debate to discuss the 50th anniversary of the end of hostilities, “after many years of fighting and after much travail the Allies succeeded in defeating a determined, efficient and

dedicated enemy and it is right and fitting that we recall that feat of arms. Secondly, for us and for many of our allies the end of the war represented a triumph for democracy and for democratic ideals.”⁸² Since the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day, however, the Holocaust has become increasingly central to popular understandings of the past and interpretations of British identity. As Andrew Dismore MP noted, “the need to commemorate the Holocaust applies in Britain as much as anywhere. Our country made terrible sacrifices to defeat Hitler. The period of Nazism and the Second World War remain a defining episode in our national psyche.”⁸³ Subsequently, the association between Britain, the Second World War and the Holocaust in cultural imagination contribute to a sense of identity built on pride in British heroism during this time not only in resisting Fascism but also for liberating Holocaust survivors, and the rest of Europe, from the yolk of Nazism. That this pride has not abated and that this narrative has continued to be perpetuated, was illustrated by an Early Day Motion, tabled in 2006, concerning the recognition of the newly established Veterans Day (renamed Armed Forces Day in 2009) which asserted that the House of Commons recognizes that:

“the courage and sacrifice of British servicemen made during the Second World War was paramount to saving victims of the Holocaust; notes that on 15th April 1945 British troops liberated the Bergen-Belsen Nazi concentration camp, rescuing tens of thousands of inmates from certain death; further notes the compassion, hope and freedom that liberators gave back to the Holocaust survivors, many of whom have prospered under the democratic values of the UK.”⁸⁴

The narrative presented by this EDM is, of course, extremely simplistic, if anything for its failure to reflect the complexities of the immediate post-liberation period during which almost 14,000 people died within the camp.⁸⁵

Of course national ‘myths’, and the subsequent interpretations of identity they inspire, tend not to develop around negative actions of the state and are instead shaped around the affirmation of a positive self-identity through the assertion of supposed national values such as heroism, liberal democracy or tolerance. Yet this is also achieved by positioning the perceived characteristics of the nation against the actions and characteristics of the ‘Other’. In the immediate aftermath of the war and the liberation of the camps “Britain and its allies had begun to carve out for themselves a new role as the moral teachers of a defeated Germany.”⁸⁶ The British government and the British public embraced the role of moral guide, fueled by the sense of entitlement resulting from being the nation that had not succumbed to Nazism. Rather than considering key figures such as Irma Grese and Josef Kramer as being solely responsible for the crimes that they had committed, they were also “dismissed as typical Germans, the products of a warped and diseased nation.”⁸⁷ The acts of those SS guards within the camps were now being viewed by the British public as representing an entire nation of depraved and bestial “barbarians” who needed to be re-educated before they could be reintegrated into international society.⁸⁸ Situated against prevailing sentiments regarding British heroism and valor such depravity exemplified the superiority of British national character.

The way in which the Holocaust was encountered in these early months has helped to shape a self-perception of Britain as a nation of tolerance situated against the negative characteristics of the 'Other'. This self-image, drawn from the domesticated narrative of the past and of Britain's perceived role within history, encourages a particular sense of entitlement to international leadership, particularly with regards to issues with moral or humanitarian implications. When asked about the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day the newly appointed United Kingdom Envoy for post-Holocaust issues stated that Holocaust commemoration was crucial for Britain, observing that, "we, of course historically, we were the country that stood up to Nazism, and in the early days of the war... And I think we have a lot of good things to, not to preach to other people, but there's good practice in the UK and so if we're active we can spread that good practice around Europe."⁸⁹ This evocation of British values during the Second World War and British actions in 'liberating' survivors of the Holocaust thus allows politicians, and the British public, to maintain a position of moral superiority within the global arena whilst encouraging the view that other countries should be grateful for British heroism and disinterested benevolence. As one MP declared in 2012:

"when other countries were rounding up their Jews and herding them on to trains to the gas chamber, Britain provided a safe haven for tens of thousands of refugee children. Think of Britain in the thirties. The rest of Europe was succumbing to fascism... but, here in Britain, Mosley was rejected. Imagine 1941: France invaded, Europe overrun, America not yet in the war and just one country standing for liberty and democracy, a beacon to the rest of the world, fighting not just for our freedom, but for the world's liberty."⁹⁰

Reflecting the Early Day Motion discussed previously, this rhetoric is also rooted in misconception. The reality is of course that Britain did not go to war for the liberty of the Jewish people, and the government were at pains to prove the opposite at the time; moreover, whilst Mosley was rejected, antisemitism was still a potent if less violent force in British society; furthermore, although the Kindertransport memory is one in which Britain takes solace, resistance towards further Jewish immigration was rife. Nor does this pride in British values take into account issues surrounding immigration either past or present in British society or Britain's own role in acts of genocide and colonial violence.

The imperial decline of Britain in the wake of the cessation of hostilities in 1945 has ultimately meant that politicians and the wider population have clung to the lingering memories of as the Second World War to sustain pride in British national character. The unfortunate outcome is that introspective analysis of both historical events and British actions (or lack thereof) in the present is lacking. The Holocaust is certainly not alone in being represented in this way. Even the Armenian genocide, which as previously discussed Britain has not officially recognized, is sculpted around a highly selective narrative that seeks to characterize Britain's historical response as equally positive. When discussing the genocide in 2015 the Minister for Europe reflected on the fact that "the British Government of that time robustly condemned the forced deportations, massacres and other crimes. We continue to endorse that view. British chari-

ties, as we look back, played a major part then in humanitarian relief operations.”⁹¹

The period after the General Elections of 2010 saw a newly invigorated political impetus towards a domestic commitment to ensuring the future of Holocaust remembrance, education and commemoration in British society and culture. This renewed sense of commitment to Holocaust education was not necessarily anticipated. Although the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day had achieved cross-party support, the decisive shift towards the greater institutionalization of Holocaust memorialization and education in the first decade of the 21st century had overwhelmingly been championed by the Labour governments led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Following the General Election of May 2010, however, the Labour Party’s 13 years in power came to a close after the creation of a coalition government led by the Conservative Party alongside the Liberal Democrats. Like the rest of the country, those invested in Holocaust education and remembrance faced a period of considerable uncertainty about what the future would hold for Britain as they waited to hear how the shift in governmental control of the country would impact the future direction of these spheres of Holocaust memory. Their concern was understandable and was reinforced by the fact that in 2008 *The Guardian* had reported that the then leader of the Conservative party David Cameron referred to day trips to Auschwitz as among some of the many ‘gimmicks’ funded by the sitting Labour government. The inference that this popular program was simply a “short term gimmick” generated a swift popular, and political, backlash that was played out across the pages of the national press.⁹²

Contrary to these concerns, however, the new government not only pledged their support for the Lessons from Auschwitz program but also expressed its determination to augment the place of the Holocaust within British consciousness. Reflecting this shift was the announcement of an Envoy for Post Holocaust Issues in June 2010. The statements accompanying the announcement of this role, and the sentiments they expressed, were revealing about the way in which Britain was choosing to situate itself in regards to the wider European context of Holocaust memorialization. Following his appointment, the new Envoy Sir Andrew Burns claimed that “the UK already plays a leading and active role in promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research, in tackling and resolving outstanding issues and claims and in raising public awareness of the continuing relevance of the lessons and legacy of that terrible moment in European history.”⁹³ The explicit reference to the UK as being a leading figure in the sphere of Holocaust education and remembrance was reiterated by Burns’ successor, Sir Eric Pickles, who used his opening statement as an opportunity to praise the fact that “the UK is a leader internationally in ensuring the Holocaust is properly commemorated and the lessons learnt” and to pledge his commitment “to ensuring we retain and build on this position over the years to come.”⁹⁴

Whilst acknowledging that “the UK has taken an increasingly active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust,” the new Foreign Secretary William Hague went on to suggest that although “this has worked well to date [...] I am concerned that the UK is not taking the leading role it should in these in-

ternational discussions or best representing the interests of the many Holocaust victims and their families in the UK affected by these issues.”⁹⁵ The expression of such sentiments not only implies the need for Britain to show greater initiative in international discussions about the Holocaust but also articulates idea that the UK can, and *should*, be taking a leading role within the international community. The sense of British exceptionalism encountered within historical conceptualizations of the Second World War appears to be situated alongside an on-going quest and “deep craving” for leadership which, Anne Deighton suggests, is “one facet of what has remained of Britain’s post-imperial political culture.”⁹⁶

The danger of connecting the Holocaust with overt expressions of British identity is that it allows the perpetuation, and indeed evolution of, a post-imperial identity based on positive notions of liberal democracy and tolerance that ignores or omits critical evaluation of Britain’s own past actions of atrocity and state crimes whilst also helping to defend limited responses to humanitarian crises in the current time. It is certainly the case, as Bloxham and Kushner have observed, that in “Britain racism is often seen as someone else’s problem - particularly the Germans since the Second World War - yet it does not take a fascist regime for the proliferation and implementation of racism to take place.”⁹⁷ Through the repetition of such sentiments a considered and critical self-reflection is discouraged whilst also distancing Britain from Europe by drawing on past ‘achievements’ such as not being invaded during World War Two (aside from the Channel Islands) and through acts such as the Kindertransport or the Winton Train. As Mark Levene observed in 2006, “the underlying spuriousness, indeed mendacity of Britain’s recent foreign policy record destroys any moral basis upon which it can make claim, let alone offer leadership on the basis of any Holocaust association.”⁹⁸ Considering the conflicts which Britain has participated in in the years since this article was published, and the apathetic if not outright callous treatment of refugees fleeing conflict in Syria in 2015 and 2016, one is entitled to question the truthfulness of British claims to moral distinction and the extent to which Holocaust ‘lessons’ can really be said to be learnt.

The years after 2010 were, however, defined by the establishment of initiatives similar to that of the Envoy designed to expand, develop and reinforce the British government’s commitment to, and leadership in, Holocaust education and commemoration. Following a plea from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, the UK pledged 2.1 million pounds of financial assistance to enable restorative work to take place at the site to ensure the preservation of the camps as a place of commemoration, education and remembrance.⁹⁹ Such financial commitment was also to enter the domestic landscape with the Prime Minister committing an additional £300,000 worth of funding for the Lessons from Auschwitz project in 2013. The Holocaust Educational Trust were not only to feature as recipients of financial support but were also to feature significantly in this drive by returning more visibly to their earlier lobbyist roots by encouraging further public commemoration of the Holocaust, the survivors and the liberators. In 2009, MPs drafted Early Day Motion 1175 calling for “Recognition for British Heroes of the Holocaust” in honor of those who had per-

formed acts of rescue. Whilst a number of those had been named as Righteous among the Nations in Israel, the campaign highlighted the fact that none of those who had initiated acts of rescue had been honored within Britain itself. Despite this omission, as the *Jewish Chronicle* reported, “such individuals embody all that is best about Britain - and deserve formal recognition, not only to acknowledge their deeds but to serve as an example to future generations about the importance of making a stand against racism, discrimination and other forms of injustice.”¹⁰⁰ The creation of this award was the result of many months of forceful campaigning by the Trust for institutional recognition of their actions.

In a similar vein it was announced in 2015 that Holocaust survivors across the United Kingdom were to receive commemorative medals “to mark 70 years since the end of the Holocaust.”¹⁰¹ The medals, another initiative of the Holocaust Educational Trust, featured the inscription ‘Liberation 1945’ emerging through barbed wire on one side and on the other an inscription to commemorate the British forces who liberated the camp of Bergen-Belsen and “a stylised eternal flame” that, it was claimed, “has come to memorialise the Holocaust victims.”¹⁰² The medals were awarded to Holocaust survivors at a special ceremony presided over by the Chancellor of the Exchequer who stated that, “here we stand in Downing Street in tribute to fight against Nazism. In tribute to the millions who died. In tribute to the brave survivors. In tribute to the liberators.”¹⁰³ Echoing the Heroes of the Holocaust awards the emphasis on Britain as liberators and as defenders of freedom and liberty dominated the official rhetoric of the day as Holocaust survivors were, once again, absorbed into a domesticated narrative of national distinctiveness and superiority.

The Home Secretary’s desire for Britain to take a more “active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust” during this period was also achieved within the educational system.¹⁰⁴ In February 2013 the Department for Education published its draft proposals for the reform of the National Curriculum. The suggested reforms for Key Stage 3 history (when pupils are between 11 and 14 years of age) proposed that pupils should be taught about the “Nazi atrocities in occupied Europe and the unique evil of the Holocaust.”¹⁰⁵ The deliberate framing of the Holocaust as an event of “unique evil” caused astonishment amongst historians, educationists and teachers, many of whom raised concerns about how the Holocaust was being utilized politically and positioned historically.¹⁰⁶ Tony Kushner interpreted the proposals as a demonstration of the extent to which “crude ethical readings of the Holocaust have now permeated the sphere of pedagogy in Britain.”¹⁰⁷ Others raised concerns that to situate the ‘unique evil of the Holocaust’ alongside a new history curriculum aimed to inspire a positive affirmation of British history and identity would not only ignore other genocides, but also encourage the view that, as one history teacher observed, the Holocaust took place “outside of history as something which was perpetrated by aliens from the planet evil who were defeated by the forces of good.”¹⁰⁸

Although this line was removed after the initial consultation, the original decision to define the Holocaust as being an event of ‘unique evil’ is revealing about the way in which the Holocaust has been absorbed into sections of Brit-

ish society.¹⁰⁹ Reference to genocide had been made in 2008 in a previous revision of the curriculum, explaining teachers that students should explore the “changing nature of conflict and cooperation between countries and peoples” including “the Holocaust and other genocides.”¹¹⁰ Although the Holocaust was the only genocide explicitly named, the introduction of ‘other genocides’ into the curriculum offered the opportunity for greater contextualization of the Holocaust within this field. In contrast, the term ‘genocide’ was notable by its absence in the 2013 revisions.

In 2011 the newly appointed Envoy for Post Holocaust Issues had claimed that “Britain is a very cosmopolitan society... and so the events that have taken place in other countries that are of comparable dreadfulness, in Cambodia or in Rwanda or in Bosnia, Sudan are issues which the British public are interested in and care about.”¹¹¹

Whilst these sentiments are not wholly without foundation they do perhaps invest the British population with greater awareness and understanding about these genocides than might be the case in reality. Research conducted by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in 2014 found that “half the UK population cannot name a genocide that has taken place since the Holocaust despite millions being murdered as a result of persecution in Cambodia, Rwanda Bosnia and Darfur.”¹¹² The figures shocked many and the *Daily Telegraph* responded by expressing their barely concealed outrage at the sheer “scale of ignorance of major world events among young people” after reporting that for those aged 16-24, only eight out of ten were able to name an act of genocide to have taken place since World War Two.¹¹³ The exclusive emphasis on the Holocaust and the concurrent removal of genocide from the National Curriculum, however, might not necessarily be the best way to counter this lack of awareness.

As part of the government’s renewed drive towards a more rigorous domestic engagement with the Holocaust, a Parliamentary Inquiry into Holocaust education was launched in 2015. The Education Committee responsible for overseeing the Inquiry requested written submissions from interested parties to investigate a range of issues relating to the scope and quality of Holocaust education in Britain. The Committee asked for submissions specifically addressing ‘the focus on the Holocaust in the national curriculum and the absence of teaching of other genocides’ for, as they were later to report, “the teaching of other genocides and atrocities is an important aspect of young people’s understanding of the modern world.”¹¹⁴ Ironically the launch of an inquiry into the absence of genocide in education was carried out by the very same government that had removed reference to genocide from the curriculum.

References

1. Donald Bloxham, “Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Days: Reshaping the Past in the Service of the Present,” *Immigrants & Minorities*, 21/1-2, (2002): 41-62; Tony Kushner, “Too Little, Too Late? Reflections on Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Day,” *Journal of Israeli History*, 23/1, (2004): 116-129, Dan

- Stone, "Day of Remembrance or Day of Forgetting? Or, Why Britain Does Not Need a Holocaust Memorial Day," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 34/4, (2000): 53-59.
2. Yair Auron, *The Pain of Knowledge: Holocaust and Genocide Issues in Education*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 100.
 3. Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest for the Middle East*, (London: Harper Collins, 2005), 423.
 4. Mike O'Brien, "House of Commons Debates Written Answers: Holocaust Memorial Day, Hansard, Col. 917, November 30, 2000.
 5. Mark Levene, "Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day: A Case of Post-Cold War Wish-Fulfilment, or Brazen Hypocrisy?" *Human Rights Review*, (April-June 2006): 26-59; 28.
 6. FCO's Eastern Department, "FCO Memorandum to Minister Joyce Quin," April 12, 1999.
 7. Kamal Ahmed, "Holocaust Day Mired in Protest," *The Guardian*, January 21, 2001.
 8. Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocide: Lessons for the Future Commemorative Programme, (London: HMSO, 2001).
 9. David Lidington, "House of Commons Business of the House: 1915 Armenian Genocide," Hansard, Cols. 1260-1269; Col. 1265, Mar 23, 2015. Despite this controversy some organisations in Britain did seek to develop initiatives to promote awareness of the genocide to coincide with the centenary. This included the Weiner Library, which established the 'Fragments of a Lost Homeland Exhibition' that ran for 6 months.
 10. Neil Frater as cited in Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization*, 424.
 11. Jack Straw, "Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocide Commemorative Programme." MPs and Peers by and large agreed with this interpretation of the event; see for example Lord Bassam, "House of Lords Debate: Crimes Against Humanity Commemoration," Hansard, Col. 354, January 25, 2001.
 12. "Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocide Commemorative Programme."
 13. Cesarani, "Does the Singularity of the Holocaust make it Incomparable and Inoperative," 41.
 14. [30] Tony Blair cited in "UK to Mark Holocaust Memorial Day Each Year," *Birmingham Post*, January 27, 2000.
 15. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 229.
 16. Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, "Previous Years Themes," <http://hmd.org.uk/resources/previous-years-themes>, [accessed on May 1, 2016].